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SUBJECT: THE IMPACT OF LABOR MIGRATION ON EMBASSY TURNOVER

REF: DUSHANBE 831

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1. (SBU) Summary: The high rate of emigration, especially of those with marketable skills as reported reftel, results in a very high level of staff turnover at Embassy Dushanbe. Though for the purposes of setting salaries we look to local employers, our real competitors are employers abroad, in Russia, Europe and even the U.S. Our salaries are not at a level to induce people to remain in Tajikistan given other factors that motivate people to emigrate. Key sections, in GSO for example, are virtually never fully staffed, and the HR section has a very high burden of recruitment and hiring. We have to devote a larger than normal portion of our resources to training. Over time we are seeing a smaller pool of candidates apply for our jobs, and the candidates have fewer qualifications. Managing the Embassy in the face of this high turnover of local staff presents a serious challenge. End Summary.

2. (SBU) With a labor migration rate of 30% or higher of its working age population, Tajikistan is an extreme outlier. Though reliable data is sketchy, what is available suggests that the rate of emigration increases with the level of education and marketable skills. This creates problems across all levels of the economy in finding and keeping qualified staff. This does not just affect domestic entities, but is a problem for the U.S. Embassy, even though by most measures the Embassy is one of the most attractive employers in the country. As is the practice world wide, wages are set by surveying what other similar employers offer in the country. A key problem is that we don't compete solely or even mainly with other employers in Tajikistan. We compete with employers in Russia, Europe, the Middle East and even the U.S. The very highest salary available to a local employee at grade FS-11 is \$20,000. We don't actually have employees paid at that level. The bulk of our key skilled staff make in the \$12-14,000 range annually. For people with English language and other marketable skills it is almost always possible to find employment outside the country that pays better than the Embassy. This is true in other countries as well, of course, but in Tajikistan emigration is the rule now, rather than the exception.

3. (SBU) As a result the Embassy has experienced a continuous high level of turnover that shows no sign of abating. The largest group of employees in the embassy, and at the bottom of the pay scale, is the local guard force (LGF). The LGF is virtually never fully staffed and the embassy maintains a continuous cycle of recruitment, hiring and training, to keep

the local guard force operational. We also have serious turnover in grades 6-8, which comprise most of our skilled English speaking employees. In the last 12 months we have seen 27 employees depart, about 10% of local staff. Those departing include program managers, telephone radio tech, voucher examiner, accountant, cultural assistant, NIV assistant, purchasing agent, supply supervisor, administrative assistants, investigators, supervisory mechanics, etc. In the first quarter of the calendar year the Management Office presented the front Office with a list of 16 employees who had declared their intention to depart the embassy in the upcoming year. Their intended destinations included the U.S., Russia, Turkey, Canada, and sometimes Afghanistan, Iraq or Africa working as UN employees. Two planned to remain in Tajikistan working for other international organizations. Three got offers from multinational companies. As noted reftel, it is not just higher wages that push people to emigrate; many also want better opportunities for their children. The wages we pay do not overcome these factors pushing people to leave the country.

¶4. (SBU) The impact on the Mission is palpable. At any one time several sections are understaffed, and remaining staff are covering vacant positions as well as their own work. This problem has been particularly acute for GSO. Each departure can have a knock on effect if a replacement is hired from within, as is often the case. Thus one person leaving can set off a chain of two, three, four or more vacancies, advertising, interviews, etc., as staff members move into new positions. The Human Resources Office is running a constant a cycle of recruitment, reviewing interviewing, and hiring. The RSO office has a heavy burden of employment background investigations. U.S. supervisors spend a lot of time interviewing job candidates. Each section usually has new staff members still in the learning curve, and post has to spend a larger than normal chunk of our budget on training local staff, and on bringing in TDY staff to

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cover shortfalls. Managing the high turnover puts extra stress on everyone's time, budget, and ability to accomplish their work.

¶5. (SBU) Improving employment conditions to reduce turnover of local staff is a management priority for Embassy Dushanbe. A more stable workforce would pay dividends by making it easier for the Mission to achieve its goals and provide stronger oversight of U.S. government assistance and resources.

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